

BQC - 88 - 062

Date: November 7, 1988

To: All Wisconsin Nursing Homes  
All BQC Staff

From: Larry Tainter, Director  
Bureau of Quality Compliance

Subject: General Safety - Liquid Oxygen Containers/"Egg Crate" Foam Mattresses

In recent surveys of nursing homes, the engineers from the Bureau of Quality Compliance have identified the following two problem areas. To assist you in avoiding similar problems, we are providing the following information.

A. USE OF LIQUID OXYGEN DEVICES (National Fire Protection Association 99)

Liquid oxygen is commonly stored within two types of containers. Large storage reservoirs at the bedside are used by patients and also for transfilling smaller portable devices. These smaller portable devices allow a patient mobility while away from the main tank in their room. Please note that NFPA 99 prohibits all transfilling of liquid oxygen from one container to another in patient care areas. NFPA 99 also requires that oxygen when not in use be stored in an appropriate oxygen storeroom. The following precautions shall be exercised:

1. All oxygen containers when not being used shall be stored in an oxygen storeroom.
2. Transfilling of containers shall not be done in patient care areas, or patients' rooms.
3. "Oxygen in Use" warning signs shall be used at the room door and at the bedside near the storage container.
4. Oxygen equipment shall be serviced and maintained as recommended by the manufacturer. The service shall occur at least annually.
5. All staff working with the devices shall be properly trained in the use of liquid oxygen and the transfilling in proper locations.
6. Patients shall be trained the the safe use and operation of the portable oxygen devices and shall be competent to use them.
7. Only one oxygen storage reservoir may be maintained at the patient's bedside at a time.

B. FOAM MATTRESSES AND PADS (NFPA 101, 1985 ed 31-4.5.2)

Polyurethane foam mattresses or pads, better known as "egg-crate" pads, are used on beds and wheelchairs. The manufacturers usually identify them as being flame resisting since these pads have been treated with a flame resistant chemical at the factory. However, this flame resistivity is removed when the pads are laundered. After repeated launderings, the foam pads may become a

highly combustible material when exposed to flame or a high heat source. This would violate Section 31-1.4.2 of the Life Safety Code which prohibits the use of furnishings with a highly flammable character.

These pads may be used only in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations. Please see the label on the pads which will indicate the permanence of the fire resistance rating.

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cc:    Bd. on Aging & Long Term Care  
      Wis. Counties Association  
      Wis. Assoc. of Nursing Homes  
      Wis. Assoc. of Homes & Services for the Aging  
      Wis. Medical Records Assoc.  
      Service Employees International Union  
      Wis. Coalition for Advocacy